Attitudes and Discourses of Ethiopian Higher Education Teachers and Students about Current Ethiopian Language Policy and Practice for National Unity

Gumi Boru Gedo¹, Devinder Singh (PhD)²

¹ Department of Linguistics, Bule Hora University, Oromia, Ethiopia
² Department of Linguistics and Punjabi lexicography, Punjabi University, Patiala, India, P.O.Box 147002

ABSTRACT

This article is about discourses of Ethiopian higher education teachers and students towards the current Ethiopian language policy for national unity. It examines the attitudes and discourses of Oromo, Amhara and Others mother tongue speakers towards multilingual language policy of the country and its role in bringing national unity. It also focuses on the government use of Amharic as the only language for federal official work. To this effect, the applied mixed research design- both qualitative and quantitative. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through questionnaires from 200 students. In addition, qualitative data were gathered from 20 key informant teachers through interview and written policy statements were extracted from three government policy documents. The results of the quantitative data indicated that the speakers of all mother tongues have positive attitudes towards the role of using multilingual language policy of the government on national unity. In contrary, they have divergent attitudes and discourses towards using Amharic only as federal working language. The Amharic and some of the Others mother tongue speakers have positive attitudes towards the use of only Amharic as federal working language. Whereas, the Afan Oromo mother tongue speakers have negative attitudes towards the exclusive status of the language. The use of Amharic as a sole federal working language creates linguistic conflict and unequal participation of linguistic groups in the social, cultural, political and economic activities of the country. Therefore, it is recommended that the government should mitigate the federal linguistic conflict by using either all major indigenous languages or a foreign language, which is neutral to all nations and nationalities.

Key words: Attitudes, discourses, Ethiopian, language, policy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Ethiopia is practicing a multilingual language policy. At the same time, it is recognizing one language (Amharic) for federal working language. The language policy of the contemporary Ethiopian government is better than the language policy of its predecessors in giving equal recognition to all indigenous languages of the country at least at regional levels. However, the contemporary language policy is not out of conflict. Since the last 27 years that the current government came to power, there is happening a conflict over the status of language use.

Many elite groups have been debating on it with regard to national unity. Some of the elite groups argue that multilingualism is not a good way of sustaining national unity rather it disintegrate nations and nationalities of the country. Those who argue for monolingualism believe that, people of the country should communicate in one national language for better and easy communication.

In contrary, some elite groups argue against monolingualism. They believe that, monolingualism make only one language to rule over the others. This in turn, will bring the dominance of its mother tongue speakers over the others. The language, culture and identity of disadvantaged language community will be weaken and lastly shift towards the dominating one. Otherwise, it will be the cause for conflict and disintegration. Due to this, there are different discourses on the present language policy of Ethiopia in line with national integration.
1.2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

So far, some researchers were conducted on language policy and its practice related issues in Ethiopia. However, only five dissertations that are believed to have some related elements with this research are briefly reviewed. These are McNab (1989), Cohen (2000), Dereje (2010), Moges (2010), and Araya (2014). McNab’s (1989), research was about the overall language policy of the country during that time. It was the research done in the Derg regime to inspect the language practice of the time. Her work is different from this research in that she was focusing on the then socialist ideology reflecting in the language practice and linguistic development the policy in which a single language (Amharic) was promoted to be used in all formal and official activities. In contrast, this study deals with attitudes of higher education institution’s students and teachers on the current language policy and practice for national integrity of the country.

Cohen’s (2000), study, was to scrutinize the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR) attitudes regarding language of instruction in the region in which he scrutinized identity and opportunity. His research was on the current government political system regarding language use. The central emphasis of the Cohen’s research was the minority and marginalized linguistic groups in the Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR). In contrast, this research deals with the country’s language policy and practice, and the research participants are Ethiopian Higher education students and teachers in the universities in the Oromia regional state. Thus, Cohen’s study might have had a limitation in discussing the attitudes and motivation of Ethiopian higher education institution’s students and teachers on language use situations of the country at large.

Dereje’s (2010), study was to explore patrons’ judgement on the multilingual education policy. His special motivation was Afan Oromo as medium of instruction in the primary schools in Oromia regional state and his research participants parents attitudes in addition to teachers and students regarding Afan Oromo as medium of instruction in primary schools in the region. The current study is different from Dereje’s in that its concern is to investigate higher education institution’s students and teachers’ attitudes and motivation on the current multilingual language policy of the country as whole.

Moreover, Moges’s (2010) dissertation was mainly focused on mother tongue education in Harari regional state concerning language contests and language thoughts. In Harari regional state, different indigenous and international languages are used as a medium of instruction. They are Harari, Amharic and Afan Oromo from Ethiopian indigenous languages, English, and Arabic from foreign languages. His research participants were teachers and school directors, parents and policy makers. Whereas the present study investigates Ethiopian higher education students, teachers’ attitudes, motivation in line with Amharic, and others Ethiopian languages mother speakers’ students and teachers on multilingual language policy of the country for national unity.

Lastly, Araya, (2014) study, current Ethiopian language policy contest and opportunity for national unity and development. Araya’s focus was on challenges and opportunities of current language policy of the country. His research participants was also country wide while this research’s main emphasis is on attitudes and motivation towards current multilingual language policy and practice and research participants are students and teachers in higher education institutions in Oromia regional state.

Hence, none of the studies explored language policy issues of Ethiopia using university students and teachers’ discourse analysis that makes them completely different from this study.

1.2.1 LANGUAGE AND SOCIETY

Language and speech community or society are highly related, as one cannot separately seen from the other. Every society in this world have a language. Nation as a nation should speak a language and language as well cannot exist without speech community. Hence, sociolinguistics is the importance of language to the groups of people who speaks it as mother tongue. People use their languages not only to share their views and opinions they use it to define and express their social relationships with the people among them and to the people who are not around them (Fasold, 1984).
Therefore, language is an important tool that serves various purposes for those who use it. As a result, societies give boundless values to their languages. In a multilingual society, where a number of languages are spoken and social prestige and power are unevenly distributed, each separate language is assigned a functionally differentiated social role (Daoust, 1998). For example, in Ethiopia, Amharic is a federal working language, while other major languages are regional working languages. In addition, about 30 languages are used as medium of instruction, while the remaining 50 or so languages are not assigned any formal role. As Daoust (1998) argues, many linguistic choices are not made consciously. Shared norms are based on judgments, feelings, and attitudes of speech communities. As speech communities consists of subclasses that share different norms and desires, language is both a unifying and a separating force by triggering conflicts which gives rise to such feelings as language loyalty (Kontra, et al., 1999; Garvin, 1973), and resistance against other higher status languages. These unifying and separating forces take place when societies associate them with political goals and sociocultural practices. As a result, language is recognized as a societal resource due to the identity and communication values attached to one or more languages by the community (Jernudd & Das Gupta, 1971). Such language-attached values could be shaped to accomplish sociopolitical goals like other types of resources (Daoust, 1998).

1.2.2 LANGUAGE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY

Ethnicity is defined as “…a set of descent-based cultural identifiers used to assign persons to groupings that expand and contract in inverse relation to the scale of inclusiveness and exclusiveness of the membership” (Cohen, 1978, p. 387). Similarly, ethnic groups are defined as human groups that entertain a subject belief in their common descent because of similarities of physical type and/or of customs. Any ethnic group comes into being by reasons of its relationships with other ethnic groups, usually by experiencing some degree of friction with other groups that adjoin it in physical or social space and they must entertain ideas of being culturally different from others (Eriksen, 2002; Zelinsky, 2001).

Moreover, in this dissertation, the term identity is described in terms of language use at group level. More than its dialectal variation to divulge belongingness in a defined language community, language is used as a collective identity marker (Joseph 2004). Therefore, speaking a particular language connotes belonging to a particular speech community. Identity is also associated with the demand for recognition, the notion of authenticity, the idea of difference and the principle of equality (Taylor 1994).

The relationship between language and ethnic identity is so broad which is beyond the scope of this study to explain it in detail. The intention of this subsection is thus to give a brief review in a brief way. There are two different kinds of links between a language and ethnic group. The links are not clearly separated in the minds of observers or even in the minds of the speakers themselves. An ethnic language serves its speakers as an identity marker and identifies the people who belong to a certain group. Language is a potential and primary marker of identity (Dorian1999).

The second and deeper connection between an ethnic language and the people who speak it is not easily replaced. Many behaviors can mark identity, but language is the only one that actually carries extensive cultural content. Briefly, the linguistic group’s history and language are highly interlinked. For instance, a society have indigenous language names in their mother tongue for cultural items, traditional land and geographical features they own. Indigenous names they give for their physical and perceptual features reflects their connection with their specific region. They have no names for the physical and perceptual entities not exist in their culture. Hence, they could not have a depth understanding of meaning in another language and culture. “Much of the clarity or depth of language is undeniably reduced or vanished when a people replaces its ancestral language with another.” (Dorian 1999, p. 32).

Furthermore, the salient feature of collective identities is manifested through national identity. Nevertheless, national identity is not always manifested through a language. The idea of nation-state identified with a single ethnic group that speaks a single language is no longer in existence. Originally, the term nation-state denoted a state based upon and identified with a single ethnic group, a people with a consciously shared language, culture, and history (Keller 1995).
Nonetheless, as the same author states, in the beginning of the twentieth century, the notion of such homogeneous entities had lost its saliency and been replaced by a widespread acceptance of multi-ethnic states, which attempted to invent a national identity based on a shared history and culture. This reality is evident in situations where people who do not speak a common language live in multilingual countries where the substantial percentage of the total population does not speak the common language. For example, in Ethiopia the substantial percentage of the total population does not speak Amharic, which is the only working language of the federal government, and thus could not identify their attachments with the state by speaking the language but through other symbols like national flag, a shared culture and history, and a will to live together. Besides, there are individuals in Ethiopia who speak Amharic, but label themselves as members of other ethnic groups. Therefore, language does not always serve as ethnic and national identities marker.

1.2.3 LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE POLICY

Ideologies, views and beliefs involving languages in any multilingual country are always unstable. They always change over time. Language ideologies, views and beliefs in Ethiopia were changed from monolingualism to the recognition and use of a substantial number of languages in informal settings following the downfall of the last monarch of the Solomonic dynasty and to multilingualism since the demise of the Dergue reign. This idea explained as:

Politic and historical backgrounds are subjected to the language ideologies. Nor are language ideologies fixed, stable, or immutable. They are multiple, and influenced by changes at local, national, state and global levels. Moreover, language ideologies are often contested, and become symbolic battlegrounds on which broader debates over race, state and nation are played out. However, to say that language ideologies are contested and changeable over time is not to assert that they are necessarily always negotiable (Blackledge 2005, P. 32).

There is no one-to-one correspondence between language ideologies and language policies (Ricento 2000). As the same author further explains, the overt rationale for a particular language policy might appear to be liberal, whereas the hidden agenda could be reactionary or chauvinistic (for instance, economic exploitation, increasing political power, and so on). Wherever authorities impose languages, communities resist, and appropriate them by developing oppositional discourse and ideologies of their own. Language ideologies are articulated covertly. They are associated with other ideologies that can influence and constrain language policies and practices (Pennycook 2000).

1.3 SIGNIFICANCES OF THE STUDY

There are different uses of people’s attitudes and discourses on the current government language policy and implementation for national consensus. First, the ongoing language policy resistance might have negative impacts on national integrity. Therefore, this research is helpful in knowing the elites feelings and discourses regarding country’s language policy shortcomings. It would also be the means to identify ideological disparities of the nations, which may lastly leads to national integration or disintegration.

Second, it supports and simplify the road map for policy makers and users of the language policy documents. The research result may disclose the subject in language policy argument that may simplify how to think and act. In this regard, the current research will add a drop to the tower of knowledge that will consolidate the dispute on language policy and its implementation.

The study has a foremost significance in unmasking linguistic dominance in making the minority and linguistically marginalized ethnic groups to know where their language are and struggle for the equality of every languages. It also helps to alleviate linguistic domination to end. The government can also benefit from this research in recognizing how the language policy implementation is linked with identity. It would hence, give an alarm for government and other opposition parties and politicians to handle language issues with ultimate care and deliver apt solution as language and related issues are explosive. Moreover, the study would help policy makers in giving them a sufficient feedback for making language policy reforms. In this way, the government can improve the language policy problems and discourses related to it.
1.3.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The major purpose of this study is to examine Ethiopian higher education teachers and students’ discourses on the contemporary language policy and practice.

1.3.1.1 THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY
The specific objectives of this study are to:
- Scrutinize Ethiopian students and teachers’ attitudes towards the use of government multilingual language policy.
- Find out Ethiopian higher education students and teachers’ discourses about government language policy for national unity.
- Survey feelings of higher education teachers and students towards using Amharic only as federal official working language.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS OF THE STUDY
At the end of this research, the researcher will attempt the following research questions.
- What are Ethiopian higher education students and teacher’s attitudes towards government multilingual language policy?
- What are higher education teachers and students’ opinion on the current language policy of Ethiopia and its application for national unity?
- What are attitudes of Ethiopian higher education teachers and students’ towards using Amharic only as a federal official working language?

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
This part discusses the research methods of the study, that is, the range of approaches, procedures, and techniques employed to collect, analyze, and discuss data, which in turn form the whole system of the data collection and analyses processes. It explains the instruments – questionnaire, interview, and document analysis – utilized in gathering qualitative and quantitative data as well as the tools, that is, the SPSS, and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) that used to analyze the data.

For the study, mixed methods, both qualitative and quantitative research designs were employed to gather and analyze primary and secondary data. Interviews were employed to gather qualitative data only, whereas, questionnaires were used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. Qualitative data were also extracted from language policy related documents as well as from interviews of key informants.

1.5.1 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES, SAMPLING FRAME AND SAMPLE SIZE
Sampling is the way of selection of sampling units from the population to estimate population parameters in such a way that the sample correctly represents the population (Singh 2007).

Having taken lists of both English and Afan Oromo departments’ students of the universities in Oromia regional state, from which five (5) universities have been randomly selected from 12 functioning universities. The researcher purposely selected Department of Afan Oromo and English language and literature.

The list of the entire population of the five (5) at randomly selected universities are eligible to be included in the sampling frame. There are first year to third year students in the selected universities, among them third year graduating students were purposively selected. Sampling frame refers to “the frame of entities from which sampling units are selected for a survey” (Singh, 2007, p. 88). Hence, the list of 500 teachers and students of which (310 males and 190 females) were being selected as total population. 200 sample populations from which 135 male and 65 are female were randomly selected through lottery method. Therefore, Ethiopian higher education teachers and students of Afan Oromo and English departments in the 5 randomly selected universities were the target population of the current study.

Moreover, twenty key informants were chosen to participate in the main study. The informants were lecturers from Afan Oromo, English, Law, Civic and ethical studies, Education and Behavioral studies and Political sciences departments who are the active participants in the social and political affairs of their community.
1.6 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This subsection deals with the analysis of research participants’ attitudes towards the current language policy for national integration. It discusses Ethiopian Higher Education Institution’s teachers and student’s discourses towards the use of several languages as medium of instruction, administration, and mass communications. It also deals with the attitudes towards employing Amharic as a single federal working language.

Table 1.1 Equal recognition of all Ethiopian languages in maintaining national unity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Giving equal recognition for all languages in Ethiopia is absolutely necessary to maintain national unity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

35 (53%) of the Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers believed that equal state recognition for all languages in Ethiopia is absolutely necessary to maintain national unity and 14 (21.2%) agree to the same. From Amharic as mother tongue speakers, 34 (51.5%) and 19 (28.7%) respondents respectively strongly agree and agree to the equal recognition of all languages in Ethiopia. Whereas 3 (4.5%), and 5 (7.5%) strongly disagree and disagree respectively to the equality of all languages in Ethiopia. 48 (72.7%) of the others Ethiopian nations and nationalities language speakers strongly agree to the equality of all Ethiopian languages and only 2 (3%) do not believe in equality of all Ethiopian languages. Lastly, it can be said that, the vast majority Ethiopian nations and nationalities in higher education institutions believe in equal recognition for all languages in Ethiopia to maintain national unity regardless of their mother tongue language. Regardless of their mother tongue and ethnicities, insignificant number of respondents from all concerned language groups said equal state recognition for all languages in Ethiopia is not necessary for the national integration of the country’s various nations and nationalities. Hence, it can be said that, the majority of higher education institutions teachers and students regardless of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, believe in equal state recognition of all Ethiopian nations and nationalities languages to maintain national integration.

Table 1.2 Ethiopian nation and nationalities languages in education and national unity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Allowing nations and nationalities to use their languages as medium of instruction strengthens national unity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

37 (56%) and 8 (12.1%) of Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers strongly agree and agree that using all nations and nationalities languages as medium of instructions strengthens national unity while 9 (13.6%) and 5 (7.5%) of the same language as mother tongue speakers disagree and agree to the same. Besides Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers 27 (40.2%), 24 (35.8%) Amharic as mother tongue speakers strongly agree and agree to concept that using
all nations and nationalities language as medium of instruction strengthen national unity whereas, 7 (10.4%) and 2 (2.9%) disagree and strongly disagree to the same. In the third comparison, 34 (51.1%) and 14 (21.2%) others Ethiopian nations and nationalities as mother tongue speakers strongly agree and agree respectively to above questionnaire when 3 (4.5%) and 6 (9%) disagree and strongly disagree. In general, the majority of teachers and students strongly agree to the usage of every nations and nationalities languages in Ethiopia to be the medium of instruction in schools regardless of their ethnic background or mother tongue. Lastly, it can be concluded that, the majority of Ethiopian higher education institutions’ teachers and students argue for allowing nations and nationalities to use their languages as medium of instruction strengthens national unity.

The majority of Afan Oromo mother tongue speakers said allowing nations and nationalities to use their languages as MI strengthen national unity. Next to Afan Oromo mother tongue speakers respondents, others and Amharic mother tongue speakers also answered national unity is realized when all nations and nationalities languages are endorsed as medium of instruction in their respective territories. Many of the respondents regardless of their ethnic and linguistic backgrounds appeared to be witnessing to language equality in schools as medium of instruction. However, only trivial number of them said that all languages as medium of instruction is not possible and may not strengthen national unity of the country rather disintegrate nations making them to focus only to their languages and ethnicity.

Table 1.3 Using mother tongue as zonal and regional working languages impedes national unity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Using mother tongues as zonal and regional working languages impedes national unity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA Frq</td>
<td>A Frq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above table, 4 (5.9%) and 5 (7.4%) of Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers strongly agree and agree that using mother tongues as zonal and regional working languages hampers national unity whereas 17 (25.3%), 28 (41.7%) are disagree and strongly disagree to the same. From the same language as mother tongue speakers, 13 (19.4%) answered undecided. 1 (1.5%) and 8 (12.1%) Amharic as first language respondents replied that using mother tongues as zonal and regional working languages impedes national unity while 23 (34.8%) and 33 (50%) disagree and strongly disagree to the same. Lastly, 4 (6.1%) and 7 (10.7%) others Ethiopian language speakers strongly agree and agree respectively. In contrary, 19 (29.2%) and 31 (47.6%) others Ethiopian language speakers disagree and strongly disagree to the same. In sum, the large majority of Ethiopian higher education institutions’ teachers and students agree that using mother tongues as zonal and regional working languages impedes national unity.
Table 1.4 Mother tongue as medium of mass communication and its effects on national unity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Employing mother tongue as medium of mass communication strengthen national unity</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In contrary to the previous table, in table 4.4 above, 36 (54.5%) and 19 (28.7%) of Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers strongly agree and agree to question saying employing mother tongue as medium of mass communication strengthen national unity, whereas 2 (3%) and 3 (4.5%) disagree and strongly disagree with same idea. From Amharic as mother tongue respondents 23 (34.3%) and 36 (53.7%) responded agree and 4 (5.9%) and 2 (2.9%) replied disagree. 10 (1.5%), 34 (51.5%) others Ethiopian languages as mother tongue speakers agree to the usage of mother tongue as medium of mass communication strengthen national unity, while 11 (16.6%) and 6 (9%) disagree and strongly disagree respectively. Generally, the majority of the respondents believed that employing mother tongue as medium of mass communication strengthen national unity.

Table 1.5 Linguistic diversity in Ethiopian and its effects on the diffusion of innovative techniques

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother Tongue</th>
<th>Linguistic diversity prevents the diffusion of innovative techniques in Ethiopia</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SA</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afan Oromo</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amharic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above table, 4 (5.9%) and 3 (4.4%) of the Afan Oromo as mother tongue speakers consider linguistic diversity prevents the diffusion of innovative techniques and large number of the respondents from the same linguistic background 25 (37.3%) and 31(46.2%) oppose the idea that linguistic diversity do not hinder the innovative techniques. From Amharic as first language speakers only 12 (17.9%) agreed that linguistic diversity prevents innovative techniques. Whereas 15 (22.3%), 35 (52.2%) of the Amharic as first language speakers which are the vast majority believed that linguistic diversity do not hinder innovation.

Lastly, from the others Ethiopian languages as first language speakers, 13 (19.6%) and 12 (18.1%) trust that linguistic diversity hamper innovation while 28 (42.4%) and 7 (10.6%) oppose the same.

In sum, the vast majority of Ethiopian higher education institutions regardless of their mother tongue believed that, it is not because of our linguistic diversity that our innovation performance is less.
1.6.1 DISCUSSIONS OF QUALITATIVE DATA

1.6.1.2 FEDERAL WORKING LANGUAGE DISCOURSES

In this part, research participants’ discourses for and against using Amharic as a single federal working language as well as their discourses about linguistic hegemony, linguistic resistances, and the grounds for resistances are presented and possible options that could mitigate linguistic conflicts are suggested.

According to the 1995 Ethiopian constitution Art.5, the federal government of Ethiopia recognizes only Amharic for federal matters. Besides that, the 1994 Ethiopian Education and Training Policy document elucidates as Amharic is widely spoken all over the country, it should get and taught for the same status. This document put its reason for Amharic as federal official language as follows: “Due to certain historical circumstance, the language that, in content and distribution, can be of great service to the country as a common national language is Amharic” (MOE 2002, p. 40). The Ethiopian Constitution, Education, and Training policy statements are obliged to be followed as mandatory. Citizens are obliged to accept and practice these language policy statements; especially constitution is the ultimate authoritative voice that everybody should be abided by.

Moreover, the unique features of Amharic that enables it to be the sole federal working language, as stated above, is stipulated through a deontic modal, namely can, which is equivalent to must. Accordingly, Amharic is the language that must serve as a common language since it is of great service to the country because of its distribution. That is to mean other languages cannot be federal working languages, and thus it is necessary to restrict them to regional and local levels. Such language use practices clearly reveal the presence of linguistic in the policy of government. This is because, on the one hand, it declares equality of all languages; on the other, it announces Amharic as the only federal working language. Accordingly, it is must to get language policy discourses from research participants. For instance, one of the key informants who speaks Afan Oromo as a mother tongue, argued that “I believe as every languages are equal but in contrary, Ethiopian government is practicing the opposite by endorsing solely Amharic at federal level” (Interviewee 20). As a result, the Ethiopian government is doing against its language policy by disregarding linguistic equality.

In addition to the above stated language policy documents, the terms working language, language of wider communication and common national language, are collocates with Amhara culture and Amharic language only. In addition, the terms historical circumstance, content, distribution, and great service are collocates that refer to the historical legacy of the Amharic language. These ideas imply that, other Ethiopian nations and nationalities languages have no histories, distributions, and hence they cannot get equal status with Amharic. Moreover, the term national, in the education and training policy document, as depicted in the above paragraph, reflects the ideology of the policy makers. The government have an interest in using Amharic as a national language, which might elevate the status of the language to the level of national symbol.

The Ethiopian People Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) tries to buckskin the Amharic language attachment to national symbol by substituting national language by federal working language. This is to elude the symbolic value resulted from using it. However, the replacement of the term was remain only on paper as the government is practically disregarding nations and nationalities by acknowledging Amharic only in every aspects of government affairs at national level. Related with this, the use of the term national language at national level collocates with the representation of country’s national anthem, flag, culture and language, whereas the term working language collocates with only practical aspects (Abraham 1990). Hence, collocating Amharic to the national language downgrades the association of the other Ethiopian nations and nationalities with national symbol and national representation. Not only to the symbolic representation, using Amharic as the medium of recruitment at federal level favors its first speakers at the time of competition for jobs of federal offices and institutions. This is a discrimination against the speakers of Amharic as a second language.

Moreover, the linguistic fields of other Ethiopian ethnic group’s languages except Amharic are restricted due to their limited distribution and services. In other words, the country’s representation between the Amharic speaker linguistic group whose language is of great service and the other linguistic groups whose languages are of limited services is unbalanced. This may entail that the speakers of Amharic are more powerful than any other languages as mother tongue speakers because it gives them the power to dominate the linguistic market. This practice has become realistic by enabling them to produce viable properties like music and films, and express their interests freely in the mass
media and communicate easily. In those social practices, the Amharic speakers possess the power to dominate the linguistic field rather than the language itself for a claim, “language is not powerful on its own it gains power by the use powerful people make of it.” (Weiss and Wodak 2003, P.14).

For instance, one of the key informants said, “Amharic has already developed and many people were educated in Amharic. It was also used to create unity among different ethnic groups of Ethiopia, hence, no Ethiopian language can fit to this status and the choice of Amharic only for federal official works is the only option.” (Interviewee 18). While describing the past Derg regime’s language dominance, a key informant, an active participant in the political, social, and cultural issues of his community and lecturer in one of the selected universities, argued that:

*In the previous government, there was an evil outlook towards other indigenous languages of Ethiopia. They completely restricted them from being used as medium of radio. Let alone to be used as medium of radio and television, they are even restricted from being used in any formal gatherings. The ethnic group whose language got the chance due to political dominance, was trying to deceive others saying ‘your languages broke the radio when used in the radio. Hence, other nations and nationalities other than Amharic were living in such an awful and gloomy time.*  

(Interviewee 7)

However, as the informant further pointed out, “We proved that, what the previous governments were used to say was false by using our languages as medium of instruction, administration and mass media at least at regional levels”. As the endorsement of Amharic only in all formal domains, the trend was changed and all languages have been declared equal and valuable. Nevertheless, the historical circumstances Amharic language exclusively took the countrywide status until today. Hence, there is no concrete ground to believe that all languages are equally valued.

In general, the target of the government is to have a common working language notwithstanding competent linguistic groups’ resistance that makes turning the policy into practice difficult. As indicated in the earlier mentioned education and training policy and other related documents, Amharic spread throughout the country. Nonetheless, the countrywide dispersal of the Amharic language and its acceptance by all linguistic groups, especially by the competent ones, are debatable. Amharic is used in day-to-day activities only in Amhara regional state. It is used in Addis Ababa/Finfinne, which is found in center of Oromia regional state serving as the capital city of both Federal government and Oromia regional state. Due to the past hegemony, many Amharas were settled in the city for political and economic gains.

The language (Amharic) is spoken by 27% of the Ethiopian people as mother tongue speakers. In addition to that, it is spoken by 10% of others Ethiopian nations and nationalities as a second language (Alem 2003). Besides, it is not accepted by all linguistic groups specially the competent one. Accordingly, one of the key informant argued that: “The government language practice and the interest of the people are diverging. Many people are confronting the federal language use of the government. Amharic as a federal working language is not without resistance as many people are resisting it.” (Interviewee 9) It is thus in the presence of tough resistances that the government continues to use Amharic as the only federal working language. This in turn may hamper the unity of nations and nationalities of the country. In such a case, evading of federal language use problems remains unjustified, but conceivably the intention seems to suppress the language use interests of competent linguistic groups. This agrees with, the disadvantaged languages as mother tongue speakers may have elite groups who try to resist the language policy of government (Baldauf 1994). Therefore, policy makers should control the language policy activities of a country.

Besides, the Ethiopian government has camouflaged the federal language use issue through various mechanisms. For instance, as discussed earlier, despite the 1995 constitutional verdict that all languages are equal, Amharic is used as a federal working language solely owing to its historical incident and wider spreading, while other languages are limited to local and regional uses only. This discourse practice is triggered by the general social practice that the constitutional statement has remained on paper ever since the constitution came into existence. That is, despite the constitutional verdict that all languages are equal, all the other indigenous languages except Amharic are circumscribed to local and regional use only, which labels the federal level language policy of the government theoretically multilingual and practically monolingual. Therefore, there is discrepancy between the language policy and its practice.
In brief, Amharic is of great service, while other languages are not, and thus it is superior to other languages due to its historical legacy. Historical legacy has enabled the language to perpetuate its exclusive status that underpins the hegemony of the language over other languages and the government’s intention to have a common single language that serves as an instrument in promoting social cohesion.

Furthermore, as language policy stated in the 1994 government Education and Training Policy; there should be one ‘national language’ to be taught at school for cultural relations of students from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. This statement obliges Ethiopian students to learn Amharic as a school subject for cultural relations. Students are learning ‘national language’ for cultural relations among different linguistic groups. Cultural values are embedded in languages and languages reflects social value and dignity. Therefore, students can create cultural bonds among different mother tongues in schools and consequently promote national unity. Nevertheless, some ethnic groups refuse learning in another ethnic group’s language. Amharic is given as a school subject for other linguistic groups in all regional states in the country. However, Amharic as mother tongue speakers resist other languages not to be given in their regions. For instance, as a key informant from Amharic background articulated that, “They do not have an interest to learn other indigenous languages other than Amharic. They believe that learning other languages specially the competent one like Afan Oromo may lead the country to disintegration. So we do not want to learn others languages” (Interviewee 9).

In the perspective of the theory of hegemony, such a practice is the typical characteristics of dominant language speakers as their intention is to assimilate other linguistic groups into their language and culture. This social practice is consistent with view that “Linguistic unification is followed by overlooking other languages, cultures and dignity by imposing the dominant language and culture on them” (Bourdieu 1998, p. 46). Similarly, in Ethiopia, Amharic speakers discard the learning of all other indigenous languages. This practice has in turn become a source of hatred on the part of other dominant language speakers, especially the Oromos, as a key informant pointed out, “why should we learn the riflemen’s language [the Amhara language], if they do not learn ours?” (Interviewee 9).

Altogether, at federal level, despite the presence of veiling strategies that target at endorsing Amharic only like the previous governments language policies, the opposing textual features of the written language policy extracts discussed so far, showed a major historic move in the objective of the contemporary government. The objectives of the past governments were promoting a single language and culture by suppressing other languages, while the present government’s objective is promoting the Amharic language by providing other languages with limited statuses as well as by avoiding federal language use enquiries and proliferating discourses of normalization. These changes in turn brought about a shift in discourse practice, in the process of using Amharic as a sole federal working language, of which the language use features discussed throughout this section are realizations.

Whatsoever, federal language use beliefs and the government’s policy statements have been implemented in the presence of strong oppositions. It is true that the government of a certain country may declare a policy by evading the interests and beliefs of those who resist the language that the government sets out a policy. However, such a policy is unlikely to be implemented effectively for it contradicts with the people’s interests and beliefs. It is thus important to evaluate language interests and beliefs and judge its impacts before a language policy is implemented not after the language policy implementation. In addition, a government may declare a language policy without paving the grounds to put the policy into practice mainly in order to calm down hostile linguistic queries. For instance, in Ethiopia, declaring equality of all languages in all domains, despite the continuity of the old language use trend in federal offices resulted in linguistic harmony at least until the community becomes conscious about the situation and the number of persons who challenge the situation increases. Nonetheless, as time goes, linguistic disagreement is becoming a thoughtful concern. Opposition parties and individuals from dominant linguistic groups, especially the Oromo linguistic group, are highly demanding for the federal working statuses of their languages.

Therefore, despite the constitutional verdict that all languages are equal and the intended intention to settle linguistic conflicts, the regime is fronting with the critics that giving equal state recognition for all languages and accommodation of diversity is partial it promotes multilingualism at regional and local levels, and monolingualism, Amharic only, at federal level. Hence, at federal level, the current language policy mirrors the past regimes’ language use profiles. Amharic, which was a national language during the previous governments, was selected as the only working language of the federal government that has in turn brought about contentious discourses, that is, arguments for and arguments against Amharic only as federal working language.
There are discourses that contend for the use of Amharic as a single federal working language. As the analysis of research participants who argue for using Amharic only as a federal language flagged, Amharic is selected owing to its being a common language for all linguistic groups. They said all linguistic groups speak the Amharic language. Thus, Amharic helps to link all people that live in different parts of the country. Amharic has been serving as a government working language for many years, which makes it a lingua franca of the country. Amharic is once spread all over the country and so all people understand and use it easily. Therefore, considering Amharic as one basic language because of its historical background is the appropriate option. Similarly, as a key informant, a language expert in English language and literature department in one of the selected universities and others as mother tongue speaker expressed her view:

_The only option for the federal government is Amharic because it is the language widely spoken and serve every nations and nationalities of the country. A language is already developed in reference materials and literatures. This features already made Amharic, a language of wider communication, which makes communications easy among the nations and nationalities. I believe using Amharic for federal official work is a good practice._ (Interviewee 6)

Likewise, the research participants who perceived the use of Amharic only as a federal working language as appropriate gave many reasons analyzed as follows.

_It is not possible to use all languages as federal official or as national languages. Amharic is widely spoken as a second language by millions of speakers. Hence, the choice of Amharic as the only federal official working language is appropriate. It is suitable for the better communication and cultural linkage among countries numerous linguistic groups. In doing, it creates social relations and reinforce national unanimity among nations and nationalities. In other words, Amharic is serving as bridging language bringing all nations and nationalities of the country together. It is because of Amharic that Ethiopian people are sharing information and living together in peaceful coexistence. To hold Ethiopian nations and nationalities together in harmony, Amharic as a federal working language is the only option. Otherwise, there would be a big chance of disintegration of nations and nationalities._ (Interviewee 6)

This outlook coincides with the literature that says language diversity is likely to cause less cohesiveness and less integration, and the ability of every citizen to communicate with the country’s majority language is regarded as the common leveler (Baker 1996).

Furthermore, as the study demonstrated, Amharic was taken as the only language that many people from different ethnic groups could speak. It is also the only developed language because of historical happenstances. This analysis matches with one of the key interviewee informants and others Ethiopian languages as mother tongue speaker’s claims that: “Our country Ethiopia has more than 80 different indigenous languages, due to this, one national level medium of communication is necessary. As there are no other indigenous languages fit for the status of federal working language, the choice of Amharic is the only option.” (Interviewee 6)

Likewise, a key informant and the political activist, argued that:

_We should have one national language; serve all linguistic groups as a medium of integration. Amharic is linking our country together as it is widely spoken as a second language all over the country. This reality makes Amharic a lingua franca of the country. Amharic has its own writing style. It has been using as medium of research, instruction, literature, art, and culture, and many people learnt through Amharic that makes it different from other languages. The present government also uses it as a medium to write policy documents as well as to administer the people._ (Interviewee 18)

In addition, as the analysis indicated, all languages are equal. For instance, both Amharic and Afan Oromo are equal. The only difference is that the Amharic language has ruling historical background, and thus has become a federal working language. Hence, using Amharic only as a federal working language is owing to its dominating background. As there is an international language, there is a national language, which has to be chosen based on the number of its speakers and spread. Many Ethiopians are Afan Oromo native speakers. Accordingly, the selection of only Amharic as a federal government working language is perceived as unfair. Similarly, a key informant, Afan Oromo
language department head at one of the selected universities, who speaks Afan Oromo as a mother tongue, articulated that:

“I will never accept Amharic only as a federal working language. Because, Afan Oromo can be in the same status with Amharic as majority as mother tongue speaks it. It is also widely spoken as a second language by many nations and nationalities of the country. Oromia is the largest region among the all regions in the country. It shares borders with eight other regional states among the nine regional states in the country. Because, those people whose regions are sharing borders with Oromia can speak Afan Oromo as second language. Some of them even speak only Afan Oromo as first language. Afan Oromo is also spoken out of the country in the countries like Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Djibouti and even up to Tanzania and Uganda, which are not sharing borders with Ethiopia. Hence, Amharic only as a federal working language is not appropriate and acceptable.” (Interviewee 17)

Therefore, most of the respondents who held optimistic outlooks towards and many of the key informants who argued for using Afan Oromo as a federal working language in addition to Amharic emphasized that a single indigenous language could not serve as a tool for countrywide social unification. The spread of the Amharic language and its relative development as disparate to the other languages together with the government’s aspiration to use a single federal working language is thus being regarded as an applicable practice. This is how only Amharic language is acknowledged. In other words, people’s queries regarding the use of other major languages as federal languages are seen as irrational and hence proscribed. This social phenomenon settles with the view that says when one language and culture dominate the country by ignoring others cultural values and languages, in turn it means forcing them to shift their values and languages towards the dominating one (Bourdieu 1998). A key informant, a language lecturer at one of the selected universities, contended:

*Always there are questions related with the federal working language and their answers were the constitution. I believe that what is stated in the constitution contradicts itself. ... When we see at country level, majority of nations and nationalities are speaking Afan Oromo and Amharic as native speakers and/or as second language. Amharic can fit to status of federal working language because of historical happenchance. Hence, for me, I do not have any complaint on Amharic as a federal working language, but Afan Oromo, which is spoken by majority and third widely spoken language in Africa, should be a federal working language side by side with Amharic. Currently, if we have to make two or three languages as federal working languages, we need to give priorities for Afan Oromo, as the question is age-old and burning.* (Interviewee 16)

His argument seems to be genuine as there is no federal people but there is federal government and there are federal owned institutions located in Oromia regional state and others providing services for the same. These institutions are Commercial Bank of Ethiopia, Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation, Ethiopian Electric Power Corporation, and Higher Education Institutions etc. Since Federal government uses only Amharic as a federal working language these institutions are providing services in only Amharic for non-Amharic speaking people. This creates problem to the people. The government complain that when there is more than one language working as federal working language there will be an extra expenses and additional different activities for government. Hence, from this text, it can be inferred that federal working language demands are disregarded in order to avoid expenses and undertakings that emanates if other language declared as federal working languages side by side with Amharic. Nevertheless, such extra activities and costs are too contemptible when compared with language-use interests of the speakers.

Besides, a substantial number of the research participants contend against Amharic only as a federal working language. For instance, a key informant, Afan Oromo language department head at one of the sample university, claimed that:

*I do not believe that making Afan Oromo a federal working language will create the Oromo language supremacy. It will be a problem if we take it in this aspect. If the reason is that the Oromo language is suitable to communicate with others as well as to mirror our culture, it can be taken as an instrument. Thus, trying to make it a second language owing to the issue of dominance is problematic that should not be legitimated. It is good if the number of speakers of the language and their wide coverage is taken as an advantage. The issue of domination should not be the reason. Knowing and using the language creates an opportunity as a tool of communication.* (Interviewee 12)
Another key informant, a language lecturer in the selected universities alleged that: “Amharic as a federal official language is appropriate for a time being, but it should not remain only Amharic because it is possible to modify the constitution” (Interviewee 8).

Thus, after a time, other major languages should be used as federal working languages. Likewise, a key informant and head department of Afan Oromo and the lecturer at the same university claimed that: “up to now making Amharic a federal working language is reasonable. Nevertheless, linguistic and ethnic group’s inequalities and linguistic rivalries are becoming ostensible, and hence Afan Oromo, which is a widely spoken language, should be used as a second federal working language.” (Interviewee 20)

1.6.1.4 DISCOURSES AGAINST THE FEDERAL WORKING LANGUAGE

There are dialogues that contend strongly against the use of Amharic as only federal working language. Research participants who perceived the use of Amharic only as a federal working language as inappropriate gave many reasons as analyzed below. It is not fair to use only one language for federal purpose in the country where there are more than hundred millions population that speak many different languages. There are other unprejudiced options. For instance, using Amharic, Afan Oromo, Tigrinya, and Somali takes all major languages and the language use interests of their speakers into account. In contrast, using Amharic only as a federal working language satisfies the interest of the Amharic speakers and a few politicians only. Besides, it mirrors the culture and identity of Amharic ethnic group only. What is more, it limits the spread of other indigenous languages, and so languages that have many speakers are intimidated. Subsequently, there are debates and discourses on language implementation of the country.

Moreover, the analysis prevailed, the preamble reads that the aim of the constitution is to conciliate past prejudice, but the use of Amharic as the only federal working language is corresponding to committing another prejudice. Therefore, as the analysis of the research participants’ views designated, there are confrontations over using Amharic as a single federal working language. Moreover, as the analysis displayed, forcing other nations and nationalities to use Amharic at federal level as opposed to their readiness is unjust practice. Allowing those who resist the federal working language to use their languages or provide them with other possible options such as major indigenous languages like Afan Oromo and others in addition to Amharic are thus regarded as possible resolutions for federal language use conflicts. However, government is not giving attention to this burning issue and hence linguistic domination and the consequent complications of linguistic hegemony are in place. In brief, there are confrontations over the federal working language, and such linguistic resistances are ascribed to linguistic supremacy. This concurs with argument that hegemony is the dominance on linguistic, economic, cultural and other important aspects of a society (Fairclough 1992).

Amharic hegemony continued because the language has acknowledgement from the ruling party. Amharic is selected as a federal working language and thus people who speak Amharic easily are chosen at the expense of those who do not speak the language. The Amharic as mother tongue speakers who argue for maintaining its exclusive federal status, and the ruling party attempt to get the consent of the society and those who resist it or forward their counter ideology. Related with this, there is an argument that says, there are always a linguistic competition between the dominant and the inferior languages in the situation where only the dominant language flourish and prosper and the inferior language are to be conquered (Wiley 2000). For decades, this situation has been in practice between Amharic and other Ethiopia languages.

The resistance against Amharic hegemony is reflected in many different domains such as official and unofficial meetings, mass communications, administration, and now a days in business communications as well. The use of Amharic as a federal working language has become a battleground, as it is related to job opportunities, linguistic and cultural domination, and people’s discrimination. As the analysis of the participants’ interpretations acknowledged, in Ethiopia, the Amharic as mother tongue speakers thrive ideologies of cohesion and unity through a common language. The mother tongue speakers of Amharic also use their language to build their own identity in the form of national cultural recognition as well as in the form of control of mass media discourses and job opportunities of the country. Beside Tegarus who used to control key political positions before new Prime Minister’s Reform from the same party, the Amharic speakers are hence the privileged group of the chances from using Amharic as a sole federal working language. This matches with the idea that in a multilingual country, speakers of
the dominant language are immediately placed at an advantaged position for a language has a number of crucial roles to play as groups realize its value for manipulation and for attaining power. Subsequently, the speakers of the dominant language use it as a tool in controlling the whole ball of wax (Shohamy 2006).

Likewise, using Amharic only as working language in common social affairs such as the capital city and federal institutions helps to serve the first speakers of the language as a tool of control and cultural manifestation than any other linguistic groups. This practice has in turn brought about the emergence of federal working language resistances that attempt to adjust deranged opportunities, cultural ascendancy, and unbalanced job opportunities among various linguistic groups. There are individuals and political parties that resist the use of Amharic as a sole federal working language. The Oromo takes the highest share due to various reasons; they constitute a substantial percentage of the total population of the country more than any linguistic groups. With regard to this, one of the key informants, an Oromo language department head at one of the selected universities from which data was collected and who speaks Afan Oromo as a mother tongue, witnessed that:

> The previous governments endorse only one language. They did not give the chance for other languages. For instance, if we see the Haile Selassie regime, the central ideology was one nation, one language, one religion. Amharic overwhelmed other languages. Presently, the other nations and nationalities consider Amharic as a hegemonic language that makes them to take a stand not to have a good attitude towards the language. For this reason, the nations and nationalities think that the then administration overwhelmed them. For instance, while we were in university, people were saying, there were a significant number of Afan Oromo speakers in the Ethiopian universities, and some of them used to speak Amharic as a second language while many of them cannot speak Amharic and even they do not have an interest to learn it due to the past hegemonic attitude. Currently, there is aggravating demand to make Afan Oromo an official language of the federal government side by side with Amharic. (Interviewee 14)

From this text, it can be inferred that the Oromo people, who constitute a substantial percentage of the total population, are arguing against the use of Amharic as a sole working language of the federal government. In fact, other languages speakers oppose the use of Amharic as a single working language. In brief, people are resisting the use of Amharic only due to disproportional advantages that its speakers get. Otherwise, people would not argue against social integration, if their cultural and linguistic identities are respected and get recognition in the national and international stage. Their resistance also resulted from the uneven economic advantages that the Amharic speakers are getting from using their language as recruitment medium of federal institutions that makes them to be more fit to succeed in passing the examinations than others who speak Amharic as a second language do. This circumstance adheres with the idea states such disputes and pressures are manifested in the representation and use of languages (Shohamy 2006).

Because of the disproportional gains that the mother tongue speakers of the federal working language obtain, there are respondents who resist the use of Amharic as a sole federal working language. Consequently, they suggest use of two or more languages. For instance, a key informant, who is one of the lecturers of Oromo language, firmly claimed that:

> Language is the main stage where identity is manifested and the mirror through which the culture of its speakers is reflected and thereby recognized by others throughout the world. That is why I am arguing against the use of Amharic as a sole federal working language because it promotes the identity, cultural recognition, and dominance of one group. Consequently, we decided to use at least two [Amharic and Afan Oromo] languages as working ones in federal offices and the capital city to prevent dominance and realize the presence of other linguistic and cultural groups. The reason is that we cannot think of identity in the absence of language. ... Language is the base for identity because it is through language that people express themselves, work, and communicate with other people. Not only that but also language in mother tongue education makes children to be effective in education as it enhances innovation without any language barriers. It also makes them share their culture and preserve national integrity. (Interviewee 9)

This text implies that the use of Amharic only as a federal working language promotes the Amhara’s identity and culture and blurs the presence of other linguistic groups and keeps them far from the national stages and international recognition. In order to alleviate the cultural and linguistic domination of the Amharas and settle the presence of other linguistic groups, other languages should be used as federal working official languages.
In general, the use of Amharic as the only federal working language makes the mother tongue speakers of the language more beneficiaries than any other linguistic groups. This practice is similar with other multilingual countries that use one dominant language as a working language of their governments. For instance as English and small French speaking elites in Canada control the key power in the areas of management, politics, and the economy. Likewise, in Ethiopia, political parties whose main goal is political resistance have started to use language as a means to get public support. Political parties and individuals have started to associate the language use in federal institutions, including in the capital city, with individual and group recognitions, social and cultural statuses, and job opportunities. Language conflicts might therefore get more complex than ever and thereby force the government to reform its language policy as people who oppose the federal working language have tangible reasons.

In addition, the arguments against Amharic hegemony reflect ideological clashes and power relations between groups in the society. The arguments also propose a way out, focusing on the use of the major either indigenous languages or a neutral foreign language, English, as federal working language can solve the linguistic conflicts and alleviate linguistic domination.

1.7 CONCLUSIONS

✓ The study was an investigation is contentious discourses of Contemporary Ethiopian language policy and practice. Having collected necessary data from research participants, it came up with the following conclusions.

✓ Higher education institution students and teachers have positive attitudes towards the use of many languages for multiple purposes. However, the Amharic as mother tongue speakers have very low positive attitudes, compared with Afan Oromo and Other Ethiopian nations and nationalities languages speakers respondents. This implies that a considerable number of Amharic as mother tongue speakers have negative attitudes towards the use of diverse languages as media of multiple purposes. In other words, a considerable number of the Amharic as mother tongue speakers argue for the use of Amharic only in all formal domains. Therefore, there are somehow irreconcilable attitudes. However, other respondents from different linguistic groups have positive attitudes towards the role of using several mother tongues for multiple purposes for national unity.

✓ The current language policy has generated two national unity related contesting views: (1) it is destructive of unity and thus should not be promoted, and (2) it is a good policy for it advances unity through tolerance and accommodation of diversity.

1.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions that are stated above, the following recommendations are made:

✓ There are people who are doubtful about strengthening the unity of the country by promoting diversity, and thus they argue against it. The government should therefore create awareness about its appropriateness through radios, television, and other possible media and thereby eliminate the views that Ethiopia could not continue as a united country if one language is not used as a medium in all formal domains.

✓ The government should aggressively use local languages to exploit indigenous knowledge in order to enhance the instigated rapid economic development of the country. It should also provide the citizenry to learn in their mother tongues at the primary levels

✓ The government should solve the existing federal language use conflicts. At federal level, Amharic is found to be a hegemonic language that has become the sources of linguistic inequalities and language use conflicts. The government should hence alleviate the linguistic inequalities by implementing other possible options such as using the major indigenous languages and or a compromising foreign language (English).
1.9 REFERENCES


